ALEKSANDER BECIRI

THE BASTARD

PUBLISHED BY GALWAY ACADEMIC PRESS

2021
IRELAND

THE BASTARD

Aleksander Beciri

The Bastard

By

Aleksander Beciri

Published

by

GALWAY ACADEMIC PRESS

Copyright © Aleksander Beciri 2021
& Galway Academic Press
First published in Ireland
Galway Academic Press Galway, Ireland
Company Reg No: 488084
Email:galwayacademicpress@gmail.com
www.galwayacademicpress.com

All rights reserved. No part of this book shall be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means-electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise - without written permission from the publisher or the author, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.

Published by Galway Academic Press

Printed by CL Print

ISBN 677-9925-04-422-9

A CIP catalogue number for this publication is available from The British Library

The Bastard

By

Aleksander Beciri

The End: Pro -and Epilog

There she was, navigating her way between white clouds and mountaintops, dancing with wind shears and snowflakes, meanwhile glancing at the life she had been through down there, as though it all had been one long chaotic dream, another ugly game of her own fantasy. It had not all been bad living down there on the surface of the earth with the other creatures, once in a while it had been even nice. In a way that is how her character was formed. Being hated and loved, sometimes humiliated then again cherished and respected, was pretty much confusing. Finally, all by chance, she discovered she did not belong there, she just was not one of them, no matter how hard she and her supposed natural habitat really had tried to cohabit. Mistaking herself for being a chicken, had been costly; even though she realizes that only now at the end of her road, on the other edge of her lifeline. Discovering who she really was and flying up to her own potential, had

needed one single push upwards. Now, the past was left behind, while having found and embraced freedom, on her first and last flight to her destiny, she felt nothing at all; no pain, no triumph, no satisfaction, no relief, the truth about herself did not set her free at all. Even those mighty heights from where she easily could grab the moon, could not provide her any slice of happiness. It was just emptiness and one illusion richer taking place of her former self. No answers found, only extra questions raised on the chaotic threshold between never and forever. In the turbulent sky appeared the silhouettes of a few last memories. Raindrops touch her wings. A couple of swallows far beneath her, flying to warmer places let her know that the summer was busy on its last heartbeats. The seasons changing place was a phenomenon she never stood still to observe.

How It All Began

It was heart-winter when Mother - Hen laid down on hatching her own eggs. A couple of days further, another kind of egg rolled strangely towards her; it was a bit bigger than the ones of her own, a little grayish with sporadic dark stains upon and it was warm, very warm. Without thinking twice, she stretched her rightwing and carefully pulled it under her downy feathers; her body warmth and the company of her own future descendants gave the incubated stranger already a home. Time flies, chicks broke one after another out the eggshells; healthy chick-babies are born. Behalf one last left who didn't want to get out; the one remaining in the big strange egg. Mother-hen didn't give up, she kept hatching and hatching, until finally a black and white chick-baby broke through. The newcomer was everything but presentable; being surrounded by golden colored downy feathers and well-formed beaks of the other chicks, the disfigurement of the different species

became only more obvious. Aquila, that is what mama called her, was getting more and more isolated; her little sisters and brothers felt she was much too weird for loving. Mother-Hen however remained firm in her love, she did not care Aquila looking different from the others, her daughter is her daughter and the delayed offspring sister of those little naughty creatures she had poured life as well.

***

The situation got even more unbearable when the chicks grew into full adults; Mother-Chicken was often forced to call in Father-Rooster, time after time they held meetings because, it cannot be true that in the civilized chicken society such a terrible elevated tone of discussion was becoming normal, a normality in which even family members were getting discriminated based on feather color and on beak form. It was as though a curse was resting on the group, because despite motherlove and father discipline, as far as the brothers and sisters got the slightest chance, they rubbed it in

Aquila face again and again; how different she was and different meant scary. The mass hysteria took unstoppable dimensions until something happened, something turning their lives upside down.

The chicken family caused so often such tumultuous scenes, that not only ducks, geese and swans got imprisoned in fury and frustration but even the horses, pigs, dogs, and cats couldn’t take it any longer.

Tribunal

The animals decided to file a lawsuit, who better than the Farmer himself could be appointed as the judge. Something had to happen, the situation was becoming unbearable, that was their conviction.

Finally, the day arrived, mister Farmer chose the cowshed as a courtroom; there was no need for the cows to attend the tribunal. Not only because of their poor cow brains not able of offering any contribution to such a delicate matter, no, there was another reason as well.

Because in the meantime the spring had arrived, and mister Farmer received extra subsidies if his cows occasionally were allowed to move freely throughout the pasture; only under such a condition they got labeled as normal bio animals and he was able to increase the milk price with e few extra pennies per gallon. So, it became a win-win situation for all parties.

-Order! – shouted Horse the Clerk - Everybody rise! Our Honor, the only judge, His Excellency the Farmer is now entering the courtroom!

His announcement had the necessary effect, all the court-participants stood up, the fuss made space for silence.

His Excellency the Farmer, accompanied by an almost welded wooden hammer in his right hand, took place on the chair especially for him arranged; actually, somehow confused by all this disproportional commotion of the last month. Several times had he tried to ease the tension throughout mediation attempts, without success. Now things had gotten out of control, it was going to cost him time and money in order to let justice follow its proper decent course. Because decent was His Excellence the Farmer absolutely; no way had he the intention of allowing this tribunal degenerate into a puppetry; absolutely not, the way this lawsuit is going to be run, had to be a democratic shining pinnacle, the

passport of both the animal civilization in his farm and of his farmers identity in his entire farmers existence.

-Good day, what is this all about, these annoying rumors? - finally the judge asked after taking a deep, controlled breath.

-It is her, she, she, Aquila the Wild, she must be punished! - all the chickens clucked in a chaotic choir.

-No, that is not how it works here; punishing just like that. This is a court of law; she is innocent until proven otherwise.

-She is guilty, guilty as charged! - the clucking made by the chicken sounds got even more polluting. - We are a good functioning democracy and the majority of votes count. You cannot take the risk of not listening to us!

-Quiet! If you do not stop nagging immediately, I swear to God I will send you all to the chicken factory and I am done with the biological farming. If becoming fat, lazy broilers and pitiful ley-hens, is what you are looking for, then be my guest! We are not a banana-republic here! - his message seemed to come across loud and clear, at

least that was how he interpreted the immediate returned silence. Even the judge himself got a bit shaken by the intonation of his own voice, a few seconds later after regaining the normal phlegmatic dimensions of his calm personality. His Excellency the Farmer pulled himself together, temperance as one of the fundamental power virtues came back to him and as a real judge is supposed to be, he continued:

-Okay, we are going to review and examine the whole story to the slightest detail, and just like any decent court of law, we are going to need a prosecutor. We would like to know and establish what the charges are, don't we?

-We already have figured it out. The one who is going to defend our interests is mister Rottweiler - sounded the firm decision of the chickens and the judge got a bit scared. His Excellency was familiar with the aggressive features of mister Rottweiler and appointing him as public prosecutor was not something the good judge was comfortable with. On the other hand, mister the

Farmer was also afraid of not granting the demand to the majority of the population; the unrest and dissatisfaction in his farm could grow exponentially. What to do? Remaining true to his principals or listening to all the voices of his farm-subjects? The pressure on his shoulders was building up and finally judge the Farmer conceded. However, he decided to keep a closer eye on the prosecutor Rottweiler; this process was under no circumstances going to become a miscarriage of justice.

The tribunal was duty-bound to its own standards, which meant a lawyer was to be found in order to protect the rights of the defendant, even though Aquila's destiny seemed a priory sealed. Mistress White the Swan was already graduated from the low school and she was the smartest of all, which made it not that difficult for judge the Farmer in appointing her as Aquila's lawyer. Her impeccable reputation was not questioned neither by supporters nor by opponents. His Excellency was aware of his fresh-appointed prosecutor

Rottweiler needing a strong personality as opposition, someone capable of resisting him, otherwise the right of the defendant would be anyway violated, the conviction would be a fact even before starting the trial.

One Year Earlier

-Ladies and gentlemen welcome! Today we mark the launch of the social media. It is a milestone, but its implementation is a mega-project! - it was mistress White the Swan opening the meeting, clearly nervous.

-Do you mean Base-Fook, Twister, Dirty-Gram and Krap-Chat? – the cackling, barking, quacking, meowing, snorting braided throughout each other into an insolvable nasty noise.

-What are you smart creatures; you are already well-informed.

-That is right, but isn't social media something more for the bored human world than for the biological animal community?

-That can be true, but the project is meant for a higher cause; namely for the larger majorities of livestock industrial farming where animals lacking living space start to get on each other's nerves. In that case, Base-

Fook for example, can have a positive effect in reducing aggression. - argued White the Swan

-You mean the humans trying to humanize us? No, thanks; aggression is not our problem; we are a non-violent community.

-You are correct, but did you know that there in the human world; likes, followers, tags and reactions are simply online for sale and it does not matter who you are and what you do, you could make yourselves as beautiful as everybody else, even extra handsome and extra smart if you pay a little bit extra? All of this can happen meanwhile seating on your lazy butts. You can fake what the heart desires behind the screen and achieve everything. Millions of invisible online friends end followers can be made and one of you can become Base-Fook - king of even Twister - president.

-We find that interesting!

-Wait a moment! - suddenly White the Swan panicked. - I am receiving news.

-That is impossible you, silly, big goose! You are talking to us, right now, aren't you?

-I am not a goose by the way, but while talking to you on my smartphone appears a pop up: Rainbow-Language-Hints.

-What does that mean?

-I do not know it myself. That is why I am going to read it for you:

'Municipality employees in Amsterdam receive rainbow language tips. The word refers to the LGBT movement and the characteristic flag.'

-What is all that, movement, and flag?

-People who do not identify themselves neither as men nor as women. Calm down all because I am going to read further: '…instead of calling people as "ladies and gentlemen", addressing forms as "dear everybody" have been recommended. This follows the example of the London Underground where travelers instead of hearing "ladies and gentlemen" every morning, were welcomed with "hello everyone" last month.

-Tock, tock, tock! Does this mean that from now on I am not allowed to call my chick male students as little men? I find that difficult - interfered the teacher of class 1A.

-No, no, we find it all fascinating, even though we do not understand it completely - interacted a couple of little pigs sitting on the first row. - It is just reversing the idea that normally are people learning from us and now is it the other way around, puzzling us. Maybe we have got something to learn from people as well. Is that not the world upside down?

-Focus please! - White the Swan got the feeling that this event was going to derail, and that the civility of the idea could be taken hostage by chaos and animal instincts. After launching a short pause and the attendees had been calmed down, she pulled herself together, took a deep breath, tightened the tie around her neck choosing another voice intonation:

-Let's stop beating around the bush, shall we? This is a development not to be stopped; we must take or leave it, no not leave, we can only take it! I understand that

every beginning is difficult, I really do, but I promise you one thing: within a month you will have mastered everything, and you are going to realize that a life without social media, is no life at all. Just give yourself the benefit of the doubt, deal?

A religious dispute

And now I would like to talk about something else, a pressing matter needing our attention. A serious problem has emerged last week in our farm and if we do not do anything about it, the situation could cause irreparable damage.

-That is?!

-A religious issue.

-What does it mean again? Are we going to act normal just for once, the way how decent animals are supposed to do?

-It is, eh, how shall I put it into words, I do not really know. It has blown over to us from the humans. On behalf of his Excellency the Farmer there is a mediation matter between cows and pigs to be addressed. Who represents the cows? - asked White the Swan.

-Me! - answered Bella, the most beautiful creature of her community. After carefully checking her own mirror

image on the window opposite, adding her stem a bit of swung, she continued:

-On behalf of the cow community I would like to sue the pigs. Our bellowing morning ritual of eight thirty gets disturbed by their piggy grunting attitude precisely at eight thirty-one every single day. We are fed up; we are the original farm natives, they are newcomers. It is not much asked of their side, whether they adjust a little bit to our norms and customs. They are making our lives miserable and the brain behind this all is Bacon the Grunt.

-Who defends the interests of the pig population? - interrupted mistress the Swan, afraid that Bella, choked in her emotions, could trigger a mass hysteria.

-That would be me, - Bacon the Grunt took over, pretty much dominant and arrogant as well.

-Okay, it is you then the man fuelling the conflict. What is the side of your story?

-It is our fundamental right to practicing our rituals where and when we please. We have no intention

whatsoever to change that because of their negging and baseless complaints; who the hell do they think they are? They inflict the same shit to us.

-What they are saying is not true! - protested a couple of cows.

-Of course, it is true! - stated Bacon the Grunt.

-Truth? Really ladies and gentlemen; cows, and pigs? I strongly advise you not attach much value to this word. The claim and search for truth can be like the search for the spider in his own web. Entangled within the thread, having two eyes, and looking for the eight-eyed spider, the web - creator. When you think you have spotted it, it has already swallowed you up a thousand times. Let us be careful when we search for the truth because most of the time, we really do not know what we are talking about. So, let us stay focused on the topic mister the Grunt and lady Bella, shall we?

-Okay! - both agreed.

-I understand your dilemma mister Bacon the Grunt but I still have one question for you: how comes that

normally you and your people practice the prayer at nine thirty and only since last week that is brought forward at eight thirty-one? By doing this, are you aware of threatening the liberties of the other groups? Have you thought about it?

-Of course, I think of everything. The roots of the problem, however, lie much deeper than that. As a matter of fact, we have nothing against the cows, we believe our boss the Farmer himself is here the problem.

- Aha! That is an interesting angle of approach. What is the problem with our boss the farmer?

-Well, he claims us to be bio-animals, but is this the right definition of who we are and what we do? Are our rights always respected? It is too much to summarize all what is happened but the decision of one year ago was the nail in the coffin. The image of the drop that overflowed the bucket is here very fitting. - Bacon the Grunt stopped suddenly.

It was a remarkable observation; even the tough, arrogant mister the Grunt left a couple of tears rolling on his face. Whether those were tears of sadness, anxiety, or outrage, it did not matter. White the Swan understood how serious the situation was. Empathizing, she went on asking:

-What has precisely happened one year ago?

-Without any form of consulting a new castration method got implemented, whereby the male members of our community are sterilized by means of an injection instead of cutting our balls according to the old-fashioned way. If you must lose them anyway, then we ‘d rather have it our traditional bloody manner; the ritual being performed throughout and by centuries-old pig-generations.

-I fully understand the sensitivity and the gravity of the situation. All my findings are going to be passed to our boss his Excellency the Farmer. Because to be honest those things are above my pay-check. Let us hope he does not have bigger fish to fry. Let’s return to the

original reason of our meeting; the conflict between cows and pigs. Shall we consider is as case closed? - she observed the reaction of Bella and Bacon at the same time.

- Yes, we have made our point and we are not going to bother the cows anymore. We are sorry! - apologized mister Bacon the Grunt.

- It is now all water under the bridge. - responded Bella the Cow.

-Which bridge?

-It is a way of speaking.

White the Swan did what she promised, by bringing the whole issue under the attention of his Excellency the Farmer. It turned out to be a hard nut to crack, more difficult to figure out that anybody could imagine, and the boss decided to park the dossier in the drawers with another few cold cases. In the meantime, a lot of things happened; working groups, inter-visions, talk-shows, counselling sessions were organized. It did not help.

Temporarily was decided to maintain and follow the constitution. Above colour, origin, weight, appearance, religious and political convictions, we are all animals. Animal instincts, often oppressed the last years, had to be given the necessary space and freedom. All thanks to his Excellency the Farmer and lady White the Swan.

White the Swan

It was a special night. Excited by her assignment and the coming trial she could not fall asleep. Feeling flattered, she tried to understand how she had deserved the honour from his Excellency the Farmer.

Meanwhile she found herself in an ecstasy and enjoying half dreamy from the good results of the past, she got shakenly awake from at first gently knock at her door, a sound slowly amplifying, till it became a furious thrashing.

-Who is there? - she asked obviously terrified.

-I am the prosecutor, mister Rottweiler.

-What do you need?

-I would like to discuss certain issues concerning the trial of tomorrow.

Lady the Swan got suspicious; prosecutor and lawyer of the same topic coming together the night before the legal proceedings? That was not written in any law book, at least not in the ones she had read. Although

being afraid she still opened the door. A heavy argument followed, and the defender did not change opinion at all, her attitude remaining firmly intact. What she was asked to do, was unheard of, unethical, professionally irresponsible, and totally illegal. She was supposed to twist all the facts and manipulate the attorney - client confidentiality; Aquila was already guilty according to the prosecutor. For one last time she made it clear to mister Rottweiler that the justice system she believed in was differently wired and someone was innocent till the contrary is proven in a court of law. Her argument became too much to swallow for the prosecutor and his sharp teeth grabbed her by the throat. She could not breathe any longer, everything around her got darker and darker. Just before falling unconscious, the barking words of mister Rottweiler left no room for misinterpretation, no misunderstanding space:

-If your life is precious to you, you will know how to argue the case tomorrow.

Sentencing

The judgement day arrived. The court room got so overpopulated that, because of the lack of chairs, a lot of spectators had to stand. The judge, officially wearing his toga had already taken place within his confined bench territory, even the prosecutor had started reading his opening statement, meanwhile nobody had noticed the absence of the defence counsel. His Excellency the Farmer had returned from his normal farmer - activities and in the hectic of his existence, he had even forgotten to take off his farmer - boots and for once in his lifetime to putting on a decent pair of shoes, suitable for this special occasion. Fortunately, his toga was long enough to partly camouflage the mud of the gumboots. He pulled himself together and became aware of something terribly ging wrong in his courtroom. In his mind he had dotted all the i's and crossed all the t's in order to make justice prevail.

-Stop! - he finally shouted. - For god's sake, how on the earth did we start without the lawyer! Where is lady the Swan?

Somewhere at the end of the hall the defending advocate appeared, slowly dragging herself towards the judge. The aula got stock-still.

-Lady the Swan, what kind of scene is this? - his Excellency the judge asked firm.

-I beg your pardon your honour. My conscience prohibits me to defend the accused.

-What kind of nonsense is this?

-What I am about to reveal goes against every fibre of my being, against every white feather covering my skin.

-I hold you personally responsible for contempt of this court. How are we supposed to continue this hearing without you?

-I am so sorry your Excellency, no disrespect at all! I have come across new facts, which have raised conscientious objections, making the adequate fulfilling of my duty as the defendant attorney impossible.

- Why are you limping and why are you wearing a scarf around your neck?

-I…I, last night I fell from my bed and this morning I noticed catching a cold.

-Whatever! We will talk about it later. And now back to the order of the day. Who is going to defend Aquila? - he addressed to the audience abruptly; nobody reacted. Overwhelmed in confusion, finally he spotted Mother-Hen standing up; in the meantime, Mother - Chicken was transformed into an old lady. Making an elegant gesture, she asked to be heard. At first the silence got interrupted and noises took the upper hand again, until his Excellencies the Farmer threatened with repercussions.

-This is all so ridiculous. Because my daughter is different from everybody else around here, does not she deserve an equal and fair treatment? This whole trial is a farce. It should never have gone so far; this is merely a racist discrimination. But if nobody is brave

enough to defend my daughter, I will do it myself. - Mother-Chicken got emotional, her tears unstoppable.

-Thank God and thank you Mother-Chicken! - judge the Farmer said. - and now prosecutor Rottweiler resumes the opening argument. Please go on!

-Thank you honour, honourable members of the grand jury! Actually, we need no jury at all today, because after proving beyond any reasonable doubt the guilt of the accused, even an ignorant brain, does not need to think twice of what her fate is going to be. Not only is she different from every member of our community and never has she given price of her true country of origin, but she also behaves strangely and against all the norms and values of the animal society in our farm. neither efforts nor resources have been spared to make her feel welcome. A lot if initiation taming rituals have been performed, expensive integration courses organised, in order for her to become really one of us, all of them failed. The way she keeps talking, walking, moving, untamed jumping around, demonstrates not only

ungratefulness, but also no love whatsoever or any form of commitment to our farm. Cynics might say whatever they desire but she forms a real danger to us all. Any other verdict undermining the spirit of this harsh reality, except the guilty one, is a serious insult of the intelligence towards our community.

-This is absurd your honour, how dares the prosecutor to fabricating all this rubbish? Danger? Indeed, one could use such a definition if this spastic narrow-mindedness is going to be the new trend, the new norm from now on. In that case, is this an extremely dangerous development, indeed.

-Madam Mother - Chicken! Will you please wait for your turn? - You are going to have your opportunity later. Then he addressed to the prosecution:

-Mister Rottweiler, I command you to restrict simply into pointing to the facts and not to use my court as a podium for your political points of view. I am not going to allow you converting this arena into a demagogic plea for anybody, are we clear?

-Yes, your honour. I will call in a minute all witnesses to the stand.

And one after another they appeared; chickens, dogs, cats, ducks, goose, pigs. All of them under oath testifying how aggressive Aquila was. Some incidents seemed real, but in its overall the whole case was one large fabrication, one factory of fake news, one incomprehensible avalanche of hatred and outrage. While the hysterical testimonies were coming to an end, all the made-up facts started more and more to look like an indisputable reality, at the best-case scenario one could not understand, see or say any longer which of it was true or what was a lie. And to top it all off, the last witness of the trial got announced.

-Your honour, I call lady White the Swan to testify. - declared the prosecutor.

-Objection! Until this morning she was the defending attorney. This is unprecedented! - Mother -Chicken protested.

-Your Excellency, with your permission, maybe is this the very reason why lady the Swan stood-down from her duty. She is in possession of irrefutable evidence which proves the guilt of the suspect. Evidence by the way, gathered much earlier before being appointed to represent Aquila. - mister Rottweiler concluded, immensely proud of himself and as a self-righteous smug he was, he sat down.

-It is a grey area, but for this one time, I will allow it. After hearing it I am going to decide whether it is relevant for the trial. So, lady the Swan, please, continue.

-I am so sorry, I really am! - started the ex-lawyer, a couple of tears rolling down along her face.

-Go on, show the evidence! - the prosecutor said, his voice compelling.

-There is this film circulating around on Base-Fook now for quite a long time - she said and on the big screen got displayed an incident of the last summer.

The film disclosed unequivocally White the Swan and her husband cheerfully dancing when Aquila interfered, trying to become part of a trio-dance. Mister the Swan was evidently struggling to catch the uninvited guest away. Aquila sprung high and using her claws, in one hit she pushed mister the Swan over. The recording ended there, while lady the Swan chasing the intruder away…

-To me is all obvious. The prosecution rests. - mister Rottweiler said.

-Who can convince who that this recording is genuine? Is not lady the Swan the only IT - expert in our farm; she might have tempered with, can't she? - Mother-Chicken tried to defend her daughter.

-No mother, the film is real. - Aquila caught by surprise friend and enemy in the court room and the silence took ear-piercing, deafening dimensions.

-No child, that is not how I have raised you, that is not who you are.

-It is true mother. I felt alone. Lady the Swan has always been good to me, but her husband was jealous. I was

dancing a bit wild when this happened. I cannot explain but sometimes I get possessed by strange inexplicable powers. Furthermore, we have made peace after I apologized to both. For one more time mistress and mister the Swan, I am so sorry for what happened then!

- Aquila's forthcoming honesty was pure.

-That is what I mean. You have heard it; Aquila is guilty, and she admits it too. There is one way to punishing her: death penalty! - the prosecutor claimed.

-Death! Death! - the animals yelled in choir.

-Silence! - this time judge the Farmer stood up, upset like never before, his hammer hitting hard, breaking his table apart in thousands of disintegrated pieces. It seemed this was the only language his subjects understood. Disappointed he continued his statement:

- Indeed, even though this trial is accompanied by a few ifs, ands and buts, Aquila is guilty! Death penalty however, just to repeat it one more time for the idiots around here, has been abolished a long time ago in our farm. Life-sentence is also something we do not apply.

After a careful consideration I think I have reached a verdict and the corresponding punishment. It is not the nature of the delicts she has committed but particularly the social impact of her behaviour, the unrest she has caused amongst this exemplary society of animals, which weighs the heaviest in my decision. Concretely; it means there is no place for her in our farm. Starting from tomorrow early in the morning Aquila is going to be forced into exile. She is allowed to stay this coming night with Mother-Chicken, but if tomorrow morning she is still here, I will be compelled to change my sentence: from exile into death by shotgun. This court is adjourned! - His Excellency Judge the Farmer knew that his punishment was severe, but he had to be pragmatic as well. Choosing what is right or what is wise? Was sacrificing the life of one for the sake of many noble enough to justify his decision?

War

-Wake up!

-What is going on? It is midnight mother; the penalty does not start until tomorrow morning.

-Don't you hear the noises outside?

-I do not really care.

-Get up my child; we are under attack! It seems the neighbouring farm conspiring with three escaped foxes from the zoo, have joined forces with the wolf that clandestinely had crossed the border a couple of days ago.

-This is not my war. The judge has declared me persona non grata; I have been kicked out of the farm for a reason, right? I do not belong to your species.

-I understand; you owe us nothing, you owe me nothing at all. Forgive me my child! - Mother - Chicken said while fainting.

Only then Aquila noticed her mother heavily bleeding from the downside of her neck; an open wound inflicted

by the bite of another animal was visible. Without thinking twice, she ran outside and without minding at all the fighting animals, she found the way to the medical clinic. She grabbed the first-aid kit and a bottle of alcohol, and in a flash returned to her mother. It was too late; in the meantime, mother had passed away. Startled she sat down, meanwhile the battle outside was continuing in full impetuosity. It was no battle; it was a bloody slaughter in which the invaders ware having the upper hand on all fronts. A lot of chickens, ducks and pigs had already fallen in action, even the ferocious Rottweiler found himself ender the merciless limbs of the Angry Grey Wolf; the aggressor's teeth piercing the prosecutor fur making the ex-scary dog look like a puppy. Aquila assessed the battleground and somewhere in the distance she spotted two escapee foxes, dragging away White the Swan, who was still alive. Mourning for her mother made space for anger and power she did not know she possessed, fury and hell inside her got unleashed. Like an arrow she flied

towards the scene grasping one of her claws on the neck of one of the foxes and hitting hard with the other one on the head of the other fox. Both the wild animals fled the scene in panic. Overwhelmed by adrenaline, Aquila turned abruptly around, pushed the Wolf away from the back of the Rottweiler and using the strong beak, she pulled his right eye off. Stunned by the attack the bleeding wolf ran away with the tail between his legs. Mister Rottweiler was barely breathing.

Aquila knew instinctively that the neutralisation of the wolf and the foxes also meant the end of the war. The rest of the attacking army were just a couple of cowards, animals of the neighbouring suffering from excessive megalomania.

White the Swan could not believe what she just witnessed.

-Why did you save me? And then Rottweiler? I betrayed you yesterday, but…but I was forced.

-Shut up and inform immediately the Farmer. We have suffered many deaths and there are so many wounded.

He must find the veterinarian and urgently send him out, right here, otherwise the death toll is going to increase.

-Yes, but how can I do that?

-Maybe by using that stupid social media you are so proud of? Perhaps at this moment it could serve to something good? I mean, your Base-Fook, Twister of Krap-Chat, can save lives for this one time, you stupid goose! No, you stupid Swan!

By losing the three generals, the enemy army was weak, the odds had reverted for the defending animal farm, the farm members slowly regained courage and started to fight back. The enemies were defeated and shortly after, the Farmer and the animal ambulance arrived. In the meantime, the sunrise signalled the beginning of the morning after. The dead had to be buried and the injured needed medical attention. Aquila forgot she was banned off the farm and instead of getting away she started helping the others. The rest of the animals had also forgotten the sentence and the whole trial of

yesterday sounded now as it was an ancient fairy-tale, as though it had never taken place.

Peace and Identity Crisis

Is war a mean to a purpose, a wind to push the clouds away, a cleaning necessity to making an end of corruption, or just a stupid explosion of unrestrained emotions going ballistic? The war is bad, bloody and brings up the worst in everybody, but it also wakes up the survivors and makes them land with both feet on the ground. Such a thing raises awareness of the temporality of everything, which means we are not forever married with this life. This kind of tormenting thoughts kept teasing Aquila's mind since the battle of a couple of years ago. A lot had changed and the farm members loving to lynch her before the battle, had now become her best friends. The peace was restored, even White the Swan and mister Rottweiler, survivors of the bloody skirmish, became regular visitors, expressing their unlimited gratitude for having saved her lives. Until Aquila got tired of hearing their monotone words

and warned them to shut up. All of it had become an irritating habit, almost taking sectary dimensions.

His Excellency the Farmer though, did never refer to his notorious court of law, had never asked for apology, doing what he always was good at it: toleration policy, cover up and pretending that bad things never happen in his farm. That is the way he is; boss of the farm and god knows her lawsuit file was buried somewhere in the deep drawers of his dusty office. The fresh memory of Mother-Chicken filled her eyes with tears. It had not been all bad in the farm and that was surely thanks to her beloved mother. In times when all the world despised her way of behaving, being and living, there was always Mother-Chicken comforting her, putting her at ease, telling her how special she was and how proud of Aquila she was. The love of her mother weighed always stronger than the hate of the others. Now mother gone in afterlife and not having anyone left understanding the way she felt, Aquila was falling in a deep depression.

Of course, she enjoyed the respect of the farm population for the last two years, but to her that was more like a dutiful courtesy of wanting to make things up, than a sincere sign of love and affection welling from inside. Who knows, after a while was all forgotten and people was going to neg again about the colour of her feathers or about her curved beak. She was not afraid of her own life, no, she was afraid of her own uncontrolled powers and energy when provoked, afraid of overreacting and hurting them. That is what she did not want to let happen. Good or bad, this was the only family she had ever known. Meanwhile being submerged into those nightmare-scenario's a strange unrest had captured the farm. All the animals took a bow, in a ridiculous body-attitude; 'they have gone totally mad', she mumbled within her beak. Aquila's oldest sister flied to her, and heavily breathing shouted:

-Take a bow, take a bow!

-Why? You already know I do not bow for anybody!

-Do you see the bird far up in the sky?

-Yes, what a view! Who is she?

-Don't you really know? That is the Eagle, the queen of all birds. She flies by, once in a couple of years to testing her authority.

-What happens if someone challenges her power?

-Nobody challenges her, but if one of the animals forgets to bow or flees in panic, she dives down, her claws as sharp as yours, grabs the poor soul, taking her prey away. We do not know where to, but that is to the point of no-return.

-Still, it does not make this display in the sky less spectacular.

-Meanwhile all the tense animals were waiting until the eagle would leave, Aquila stood upright, full of admiration looking at her. The queen of the birds flied another round above the farm's territory, descending to a hight of few meters, her wings wide open almost floating still, eye to eye with Aquila.

-Come my child, we are flying away. - the eagle said.

-Where to?

-To the Eagle-Land, right where you belong.

-No, I belong here.

- That is what keep telling yourself; that you are a chicken.

-I cannot fly, not the way you do, anyway.

-You need only to try. Shake your chicken history off your feathers, push yourself only once bravely upwards until my height and your eagle instinct takes over. Come on, do not be afraid!

-Afraid? Me? No way!

-This is exactly the rection of my child, and I did not expect any less from you. One day you are ging to try it, I am sure! - the eagle said, flying away.

Even if days, months, and years kept pushing each-other away, the time in de farm stood still and for Aquila it felt if she would die of boredom. The advice of the queen of all birds became way too tempting to ignore and on an early dawn of a Sunday, she took off towards the rising sun. It all went easier than she had expected. Getting

higher and higher, the earth became smaller, prettier, more fragile; it was breath-taking.

*****End of 'The Bastard*****

Grumpy Old Men

The only moment when I thoroughly took the time to look at my own mirror image, focussing on the other me was the one when it was too late. Remains of youth were become memories and a few forehead wrinkles looking more like scars, marked the triumphalist entry-march of the second half-time of a middle-aged man. Not funny things had already started to happen, and my body did not always obey the orders of my will, at least not as fast and as agile as it used to do years ago. Maybe that is why I tried to defy my own limits. Starting at first by training a football-team of youngsters and when even that became physically challenging, playing football-referee offered me an anti-aging remedy. At least that is how I for a while could fool myself. The party did not last awfully long, when on a slippery day, running backwards on the gras-pitch, a plastic bottle thrown by the fans of the home - team, hindered the back of my right foot, my body got out balance, the

gravity did its work compelling me into falling ugly on the ground. I might even have passed out because when I gained conscience, colours of shirts of both teams and the growing sound-siren of a coming ambulance were the first things I remember. A half hour later, the white blouses of the hospital informed me about the injury of a couple of vertebras on the lower part of my back. Prescribed intensive physiotherapy and two crutches should keep me going. As far as the rest is concerned, I should keep in my mind that I am not the youngest anymore, thank you very much. Stupid doctors!

***

Once upon a time, mankind used to have goals and ideals to getting pursued, sacrifices were made to keep alive dreams and visions. In key defining moments of the history there were always brave men and women whispering and visualising a deeper meaning, a further purpose, a greater good than life itself, worth fighting for. That was what kept us going as a human race, until recently when suddenly, the whole life-motto got

replaced by: keep breathing! One can think, such a simple task is not much to ask, is it?

Only within a couple of days the entire world changed because of one tiny virus. Panic reigned the supermarkets, empty shelves became day-panoramas, toilet-paper and head-ache tablets became the most scarce-commodity. Not necessary tools to keep breathing but…

The surviving animal instinct but humanized and sophisticated, left no space for misunderstanding of our own basic fears, of our own origin. No matter how civilized we want to pretend we are, thousands of years of evolution got challenged by our primitive, behaviouristic nature.

***

It was one of those day a man does what he has to do, when on my crutches I decided to be strolling to the market and buying my own killing doses of thirty - three years addiction, my portion of strong tobacco.

-Don’t do it! It is overcrowded downtown. It is not wise, on those crutches. - my partner drew my attention.

- Let the old man be! He is falling apart; didn’t you notice? Be happy he moves at all! - my teenage daughter could not help it, by giving her unasked opinion at peculiar moments.

Without any training and in a considerable amount of pain I dragged myself forwards, what for me was pretty much harsh to endure, for the rest it was a comic view. Tottering like a duck I found myself amongst a huge mass of people forming a long queue in front of the supermarket. Moving at slow motion and witnessing trolleys fully overloaded with provisions was confronting. There were not the normal groceries and daily foodstuffs people were caring out of the store, no, it was more than that, including a lot of dry and conserved food. Meanwhile these people are trying to survive I needed only my damn - addiction stilled.

As always there is somebody smarter than the group under such circumstances, someone who immediately

propagates a conspiracy-theory, who claims there is not such a thing as a virus, and all of this is a hoax.

It had passed a whole hour and when I almost reached the bench where tobacco products are sold, he appeared. Pushing his way forward, yelling and bullying everybody, a bald muscled man around sixty, wearing a pair of shorts and a red T-shirt with the inscription 'Power to the People' on it. The very people he was pushing around did not react at all and let him perform what he already was performing. It seemed nobody was daring to challenge him. Until he stood right behind me. At first, he made an attempt to catch me in from the left side, without success. In a feint move when he thought he had been clever by passing me from the right flank I could not help it anymore. One simple uncontrolled move of one of the crutches of the limping man I was, touched his left leg, the man went out of balance tumbling down like a bag of sand. Instead of lying there and waiting for medical attention he stood immediately up, a bloodstain on his lip, and without any hesitation

he started calling me names. It was not pain, the man was wrestling with that very moment, it was shame in front of all people he had been playing badass all the time. He became even more aggressive until the group he had harassed embraced my side of the story, that it all happened by accident and that me myself, the man on crutches was in pain. People caught him away right where he belonged; on the back of the queue.

I bought my pack of tobacco, went outside, rolled a cigarette and lighted it on fire. White circles of smoke floated on the air. Why did I doe it? Was it a revenge on the bullying man, or was I just jealous of him who even though ten years older than I was, he was more dynamic, healthier, and fitter than me? Grumpiness of the age was most likely to be the case.

One And a Half Meter Distance – Sex

They are colleagues, freshly graduated, intelligent and talented between twenty-four and twenty-six years of age, called in on a temporary basis to help in the frontline of health working where we learn to and live and struggle with the uninvited guest, the bloody Coronavirus.

While entering the school yard they quit laughing, as though I ruined their party. Hesitating, even a bit uneasy, I approach them and ask:

-Please, just pretend I am not here and go on!

-It was about my ex-boyfriend- answered one of those young colleagues.

-What about him?

-He keeps on stalking.

-That's not kind.

-Not kind? I find him annoying, nasty! - she made her point noticeably clear.

-I really do understand. Love and obsession sometimes look alike, stand in each other's way. But anyway, there is something else just crossing my mind at this very moment. You stand here in front of me, eight young ladies and two young gentlemen and I am fifty years old, double of your age. Actually, I feel a bit embarrassed, so I am withdrawing my intended question.

- Of course, you may ask anything you want. No embarrassment whatsoever!

They really encouraged me on proceeding with whatever crazy idea that had captivated my mind.

-How do you do it?

-What?

-Sex on one meter and a half physical distancing. For me it is a mission impossible.

-Actually, it is not such a silly question.

The youngest colleague throws a lifebuoy, my gratitude immense. The two young males buried their heads in the sand. Under no circumstance did they want to be

part of this derailed conversation. The other seven girls looked first at each other and then fixed their glance at me. The subject did not leave them indifferent. Still, I felt I had to rectify my position.

-I am simply curious, that's all. If my interest is of a prying nature and my intonation sounds in anyway as inappropriate, please consider it as not asked.

-There is nothing wrong with your question. As a matter of fact, you are not the first to ask. The government has been often confronted with it the last couple of months.

-You are kidding, right? You don't ask the government that kind of question, do you? - I didn't believe my own ears.

-Sure, we do ask such questions. And by the way, here is the announcement of the National Institute for Public Health and Environmental Hygiene. Grab my smartphone and enjoy the information concerning the new guidelines; Read!

Indeed, there it was, simple and plain: 'Considering that the lack of intimacy could cause tensions among

youngsters which threatens their wellbeing the RIVM (the Institution) has issued adjusted guidelines. Now you may have sex provided you have a steady partner who follows the rules. The whereabouts of the sex-partner, however, should be traceable…'

-I will be damned!!! This is a joke and a bad one, right?

-No, there is nothing funny about it.

Racked with confusion, disoriented and self-pitying, a nagging old bastard mourning the runaway of my own youth, I thanked the group, said goodbye, and left them to their own values. My loyal bike finds implacably the way back, rolling over the stone-paths, finally bringing me home. Without succeeding to process what was happening I switched the TV on.

Eight o clock National Television-News, Channel 1, Sunday 17th of march:

'Hundreds of surrogate-babies in Ukraine wait for their western surrogate-parents to arrive. Covid – 19 pandemics and closed borders have created a dangerous gap, the birth-mams possess no longer the

rights or the obligations to take care of the new-borns. With the clock ticking, the situation gets more and more desperate and the number of babies without parents keeps rising according to the maternity-home director in Kiev… ‘

At a certain point I thought I had caught Corona, and this was a side-effect of the virus tricking my brain but fortunately the next morning the same news was repeated by Euronews. Almost identical, only updated.

‘The number of surrogate-babies stranded in Ukraine has surpassed one thousand’.

The concept ‘surrogate-parent’ was something I was familiar with but never had I had heard of ‘surrogate-babies’.

Suus the Cat and Maurice de Haan

While approaching the end of a joyful day, there was a vibration in my pocket and then the cell phone rang, drawing my attention. The number was unknown. I still answered it.

– Hello, how can I help you?

-This is the Metropolitan Police, department of Cats and Dogs, my name is Joyce.

-What can I do for you Madame? – I asked, slightly shocked.

-It is your cat, Suus, that I want to talk to you about.

-Well, Suus the cat is a free spirit and nobody's property, not even mine. I only take care of her when she needs it. Anyway, what has she done again? She didn't end up in the cell, did she?

I really thought someone on the other side was mocking me.

-I am calling because there is a lawsuit almost being filed.

-Madame, my battery is almost empty. Will you be kind enough to call me in about thirty minutes when I am home?

-Okay, and I strongly advise you however, on taking our conversation more seriously.

Whistling and cycling home, in the highest levels of a good mood where even such a weird conversation only added to the joy of my day, I decided to follow my father's advice. May his soul rest in peace. As though my old man had travelled to the Far East he used to say: 'Not holding on to what goes away and not pushing away what comes to you could be a key to sporadic moments of happiness.'

'Whatever happens, today is my day' I tried to whisper to my father's soul 'and nobody is going to ruin it'.

Arriving home my smart phone vibrates again, then its downloaded Scorpions ringtone 'Wind of changes' followed.

-Yes?

-It is Joyce again from the Metropolitan Police and it is

still about your cat, Suus.

-So, this is no joke at all. In that case I am coming to meet you.

-No sir, you don't understand the gravity of the situation. We are deciding on what happens next. We are coming to you.

-You mean, 'You, like in plural'? How many of you? You mean by police car, sirens, and that kind of stuff?

-You are pretty talkative sir. My colleague and myself are coming to you in a police car and there is nothing you can do about it.

-Please lady, stop! I am coming to the police station and if it makes you feel better you may handcuff me. It is ridiculous sending two officers to my house. Has the police nothing else to do nowadays? Catching crooks or something like that? See you in twenty minutes! – obviously irritated I pushed the red turning-off button. I reached the station sooner than I had calculated and there she was on the doorstep, this gorgeous creature, deep blue eyes, dressed just tight enough to accentuate

her being a beautiful woman and just wide enough to accentuate the lady she was.

-Good evening! There is no chance is there that your name is Joyce?

-Please come inside! - her intonation professional. I was left with no choice but to follow her into her office.

-What is the wrongdoing of my cat?

-The manager of the Cinema has filed a complaint. Suus is there as an uninvited guest and brings pheasants and rabbits there, half dead, half alive. He can't take it any longer.

-Heh! Now I get it. But please I would like to be the lawyer of Suus just for a little while and pleading in her defence, I would say that until now she was their favourite cat. The employees loved her. Suus was an attraction for them and she received great attention, water, milk, and love. The movie goers really thought she was part of the Harry Potter corner show. She probably received even 3D glasses to watch 3D movies! I went on, maybe a bridge too far, confusing reality and

fiction.

-That is what I meant sir when we spoke on the phone as well. You don't take my word seriously enough. I represent the cat police.

-Cat police? You mean like animal protection police? Has Suus been assaulted?

-No, I am talking normal police, department of dog's and cat's nuisance and you are an awful interlocutor. I would like to agree on a plan of action,

-Plan of action? I have told Suus frequently to keep her instincts under control, but she doesn't always listen carefully. There could be a language barrier.

for-I swear to Almighty God, but this is the last warning sir! Are you going to cooperate? Did you know that the Cinema manager has even suggested euthanasia for your cat?

-Jesus, no!!! Of course, I am going to cooperate. I will do whatever it takes to keep Suus alive.

-Finally, we are getting somewhere! - said the beautiful officer called Joyce, while making notes of our

conversation.

I agreed to pretty much everything that the lady police suggested, I was the listener, she taking the lead, when Suus jumped onto my lap and affectionately treated me to lots of soft head caressing 'strokes' just like a cat does when she misses you.

- Ah you poor little thing. They loved you at the movie house until they realised you were just a cat with cat instincts when you offered them fresh pheasants and rabbits. Only then did they realise your true nature and kicked you off their territory for who you really are. Don't worry, we are still together…

Without realising that time was passing while I was lost in conversation with Suus, I arrived home before I knew it. I precipitated like a stone on the couch, grabbed the remote control, and together with her I surrendered to my own addiction the 'eight o clock news'. I really did not care anymore which was fake news and which was not. I just needed my dose. There it came:

'4 July 2019, Evening News:

The Frenchman Maurice de Haan is taken to court. The tourists are fed up with him. Turmoil in the village of Saint-Pierre d'Oléron and all over France. Maurice keeps everybody busy on a high state of alert. What first was just a local village issue has now grown into a national happening. The petition supporting Maurice has been signed one hundred thousand times…'

I really needed the pictures to understand that the subject, dominating the breaking news at that very moment was a rooster who forced by primal instincts of his nature, at 06.00AM sharp every single morning began his crowing. Tourists from the capital city spending a week per year on holiday at the rooster's fishing village (yes, Maurice was born and raised in Saint-Pierre d'Oléron) are not happy with him waking them up, singing the same damn rooster song. He does not give up either and so there is a 'Stand-off in a court of law, humans, and nature facing each-other'.

-The world is going crazy, don't you think? - I asked Suus.

She nodded, and I immediately knew on which side she was going to stand.

Fact-checking:

a. The French court sentenced Maurice to death. One week later he found himself in the frying pan.

b. The Dutch justice chose a milder approach. After being sued again three weeks later, Suus the Cat was forced into exile. She lives now in Wallonia, Belgium.

The Old Shoes

Eighteen and still a virgin I was when she laid her eyes on me. I carefully checked the space, first left then right; was her glance really meant for me? Her emerald green eyes, her curled maroon hair, the way she walked away barely touching the ground, all this ensemble of body parts that nature had put together, paralyzed my entire notion of time; honestly, even nowadays I do not know whether all this was just a fake memory God implanted into my brain cells in order to influence my quality of life or a real human truth, carefully built and preserved on my subatomic level.

It does not matter, I was still a virgin and not without a reason; years ago, at high school there had been this other girl, who had falsely fallen in love with me. One day I got surprised by her hundred-kilogram, two-metres-long brother. If no marriage was going to take place between his sister and me, his fury was mercilessly going to fall upon me, no more safety to be found even if I was going to find the space beyond the sun as a hiding place. Only fourteen was I at that time, getting traumatized. No marriage please!

***

Four years passed by. My forced marriage trauma transformed into marriage phobia. All of a sudden, I felt healed. I wanted to marry you, Eva. I didn't know who you were and who brought you across my path. I trusted blindly that you would not force me into marriage like that gorilla brother of that girl I told you about. I didn't even think you had any brother! – I keep repeating silently to myself even nowadays. Well, Eva was something else, she was the real deal.

The way from the Faculty of Civil Engineering to the one for Medicine where she was studying was a three-point-eight-kilometre walking distance of fifteen minutes forward and three quarters back, which became my daily itinerary, just to catch one single glimpse of those astonishing eyes. The miracle had already taken place; I got noticed by her. Often, we even exchanged small talk, because under no circumstances I was going to bother her with my own pitiful feelings. Simply terrified that what was happening in my soul was a taboo, a vision, which if I dared to whisper it, would vanish into the black hole, as though it never existed. The days, weeks, months pushed each other away, my unstable

state of mind in critical balance. No, she would make fun of me if she would suspect anything at all related to my dirty thoughts. All those guys strolling around her just like butterflies around a lighting lamp in the middle of a dark night offered me enough of an alibi for justifying my shyness. I didn't have the slightest chance! The competition fierce, the other young men more handsome, better dressed; the expression 'Better poor and healthy rather than rich and sick' wasn't really helpful, she pouring attention on me was just God's gift, not to be tempered with. Until that black Friday the thirteenth, when my mouth betrayed my scruples, disaster hung in the air, her reaction genuine: 'Really, is this the way to hit on a girl? Look at your muddy open-mouthed old sneakers, ask yourself whether your proposal is decent, or not, and from that angle of view start drawing your conclusion!' She was absolutely right, six consecutive months multiplied by three-point-eight, in total six hundred and eighty-four kilometres was the crossed distance on those shoes, including all weekends, excluding the thirty-first of every month; in rain, snow, through freezing temperatures and under burning sun, my shoes had committed a legendary, heavy duty. So, on the one hand, I hated her

comment on my shoes. On the other hand, there was the minister's son, even possessing a car at that time, who won this fierce competition and took off with the prize just like the hyena does with an at-first exhausted gazelle killed by a leopard. A month later, I was told they moved to the USA, where they settled down.

***

Thirty times had fallen the yellow, shrivelled leaves off the trees, thirty times flew the swallows to warmer climes, thirty times they found their way back. A lot had changed, life had been more than generous to a poor soul like mine; excellent working career, healthy kids, and solid family, actually everything a man's heart desires, was granted to me. Even something called social media was invented where people crying for attention are keen to share when visiting the restroom or allowing bellyaches to go digitally ballistic; all of a sudden, privacy means nothing but just another old-fashioned word. Anyway, a friend of mine innocently informed me that the girl who broke my heart into millions of pieces three decennia ago had become a famous doctor in Maryland and together with her husband. They owned their practice. They had also a son, who had followed in the

footsteps of his parents, working as a young surgeon at a Chicago hospital. As ungrateful as I could be, as the scar of the already healed wound started itching, I asked myself how my life would have looked if I hadn't felt humiliated at the time, if only I had chosen another pair of decent shoes while declaring my love, and just for once, I would have said different words to her; what if; what if…Just like the lightning in a blue clear sky, an e-mail entering my inbox caused shock and awe throughout all my body cells:

Dear friend,

Next week I am going to be at the Rotterdam Erasmus Medical Centre for a research conduct on cardiovascular diseases. I will be staying at Hotel New York.

I have got something especially important to share with you, and I would appreciate very much meeting somewhere.

Forgiven but never forgotten,

Eva.

Jesus Christ, who is forgiven but never forgotten, and what is so important to talk about? All kinds of theories promenaded around my mind; one of them was the most striking. This look-alike young man in America possessing my facial features, born about nine months after the last time I had

chatted face-to-face with his mother, kept provoking the shivers. Could this be true? You fucking bastard. How in the world could he possibly be your son when you never touched his mother? How could you get a girl pregnant by words? Desperately looking for memories, even for false ones in which I might have slept with her just once before she left, were the most confusing; something mathematically impossible. Still, there was this mysterious, inexplicable similarity. I couldn't kick it off my mind.

Finally, Eva and I decided to meet on neutral terrain, somewhere in the Green Heart of the Dutch Randstad. At the age of almost forty-eight where the body starts counting down; it doesn't obey exactly anymore to the given commands as it once did twenty or thirty years ago, the flexibility makes gradually place for weak muscle stiffness. Still, the urge of reminding her that the middle-aged man ruins of a six-pack belly once upon the time didn't entirely disappear, emerged like a slug seconds before the first raindrops touched the green grass. I started running, working out twice per day at the gym, piling all kinds of muscle injuries until the meeting day arrived. The last ten kilometres of the thirty I stepped out of my car and started jogging

towards the reunion place. Was she alone? Meanwhile, the anxiety was growing to melting point. We encountered each other face to face. She was as beautiful as thirty years before. Just before fainting, her eyes screened my entire body from my head to my feet, where she kept focusing. It always rained in the bloody Lowlands; my worn old sneakers were covered in mud. 'Jesus Christ!' she breathed in and out heavily, 'Really!? How much you have changed, how more you have remained the same!'

Transformed

I had been chained all day long to the office chair, focused on the laptop screen until I got a square head - as though I had been busy saving the world. The sound of a sudden shower driven by the wind, beating against the window woke me up. The falling darkness reminded me of the lateness of the evening. ”Go home” they ordered me. ”Tomorrow is another day. The work doesn’t go anywhere. The daily monotony possesses enough time to kill you”. ”All right, all right, I know”. My obedience wasn’t really hard to obtain.

This wasn’t going to be a day like the others. I had fallen off my bike, my scratched right leg was hurting and now at the end of the day I was faced by this poor creature right in front of my eyes, begging for mercy.

”Who the hell are you?” I said.

”I come from the Animal Farm. I’m a fugitive. I need a place to stay. Some food and a bit of affection would mean a great deal to me. It would ease my pain” the poor creature said.

This simply couldn’t be true. Last night my brain had been tormented by a weird dream where this old guy from the

afterlife calling himself George was narrating about an Animal Farm where pets had become beasts. A blood reign had arisen and safety had been erased from all vocabularies. Crazy writers, they create their own realities. Their words are not to be trusted.

Anyway there he was, one of the farm's inhabitants. "What shall I do, what shall I do?"I asked myself in a quandary. Years ago in my grandfather's farm we had those two German shepherds. They had their own holy duty of protecting the herd. Those two four-legged living creatures left no room for misunderstanding. They did the job perfectly, but nobody was allowed to approach them. The baring of their teeth would warn you unambiguously. So forget it, no pets in the house! Maybe there is something to be done about the strange human desire to have a pet.

"No! -my reaction was firm, my forefinger straightened. "You stay here!". Having made the decision to keep going and leave him I walked away, one hand dragging my bike, one foot temporarily crippled. His crying voice though kept shadowing me. "What the…okay, just for one night". I placed him in the basket of my bike and pedalled away at home.

He was allowed to stay for one night. I gave him a bath; he

ate and one night became one week. In a peculiar way I became attached to him. That was until last Sunday evening. He jumped about wanting to play and I responded willingly. I held a toy bone firmly in my hand to tease him a bit. At first his reactions were playful but then his mouth approached my hand. Not suspecting anything I saw myself as a member of the pack. Naively that's what I hoped.

All of a sudden, without any signal or valid reason the atmosphere changed to that of a slaughterhouse. Four sharp teeth of his drilled through my right hand as though it was made of butter. Streaming blood smudged the white carpet. Instead of kicking him out as a normal human being would do in such a case I froze. The red veins in his eyeballs were near to bursting. Maybe I thought, holding my wounded hand with the other, that the terrible madness of rabies had got into him and damaged him to his very soul.

"Look at you and the horrible beast you have become! I said. "How could anyone in his sane mind call you his friend now?".

What's over there?

Life is a cigarette,
Love is the smoke –
Up rolling whirlpool,
To the clouds above.
Life is falling rain,
Love is the thunder –
Some broken hearts,
Below down under.
Love and life illusion
A kind of falling star –
A human confusion.

THE BASTARD

War

-Wake up!

-What is going on? It is midnight mother; the penalty does not start until tomorrow morning.

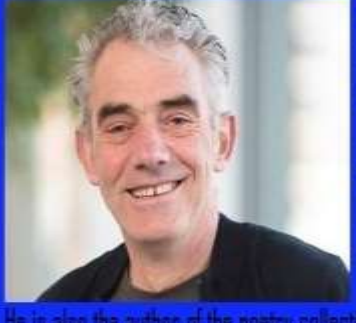
-Don't you hear the noises outside?

-I do not really care.

-Get up my child; we are under attack! It seems the neighbouring farm conspiring with three escaped foxes from the zoo, have joined forces with the wolf that clandestinely had crossed the border a couple of days ago.

-This is not my war. The judge has declared me persona non grata; I have been kicked out of the farm for a reason, right? I do not belong to your species.

-I understand; you owe us nothing, you owe me nothing at all. Forgive me my child! - Mother - Chicken said while fainting.



Aleksander Beciri is an Albanian living in The Netherlands. He is a civil engineer engaged in circular building and environmental protection. He is also author and translator. Because of his knowledge of Albanian, Dutch, Greek, English, and Italian he has been involved into various multilingual translations. He translated from Dutch to Albanian 'Aan de Rand van de Wereld: Michel Houellebecq' ('On the Verge of the World: Michel Houellebecq') in 2015.

He is also the author of the poetry collection 'Faje Njeriu' ('Human flaws') published in 2008 by Skanderbeg Books. Some of the short stories in this book: 'Transformed', 'What's over there?', 'The Old Shoes', 'One And a Half Meter Distance - Sex', and 'Suus the Cat and Maurice de Haan' have already been published on The Galway Review.

Price
€ 21.00

GALWAY Academic Press

ISBN 9789994415348
91595 >
9 789994 415348

THE BASTARD

Aleksander Beciri